

HOW END THE PANIC IN RADIO-TV?

The Demagogic Half-Truth vs. the "Liberal" Half-Lie

LOUIS BERG

THE air waves have been jittery since the appearance in 1950 of a paper-bound booklet, *Red Channels*, a "Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television," published by three former FBI men, John G. Keenan, Theodore G. Kirkpatrick, and Kenneth M. Bierly, publishers also of the anti-Communist weekly *Counter-attack* (two of the three have since resigned). *Red Channels* names 151 broadcasting people as having lent themselves—knowingly or unknowingly—to Communist fronts and causes, and lists their alleged affiliations. This is not the only listing of its kind, but it is the

EVERY schoolboy has by now heard of the "reign of terror" which supposedly makes it impossible for anyone who was ever under suspicion of associating with any Communist front organization to obtain work in American radio and television. Publication by the American Civil Liberties Union of Merle Miller's report on the situation, *The Judges and the Judged* (Doubleday), has started a new round of charges and counter-charges, with the McCarran Committee contributing its bit in the form of a shotgun blast against twenty members of the industry, without discrimination as to degree of innocence or culpability; more names are promised when the hearings resume. In the meantime, all proposals for remedying the situation remain blocked. LOUIS BERG here reviews the facts in this unhappy situation and offers a solution which he believes should satisfy the demands of justice and moderation. Mr. Berg, film and TV editor of the national weekly *This Week*, is respected as one of the fairest and most knowledgeable writers in the entertainment world, with two decades of professional experience in various branches behind him, and an even longer record of concern with civil liberties and political justice. He is a Virginian who has lived in New York for over thirty years. The opinions expressed here, like those of other writers in these pages, should not be taken as official views either of this magazine or of its sponsors.

one that has received the most publicity and attracted the most attention, and it has been made the basis, people say, for a general blacklist in the industry against the people named, with the result that prominent actors, directors, writers, and even producers named in it have lost jobs, some have been utterly ruined, and others are in virtual hiding—or so it is alleged.

The known facts are few. Actually there are only two acknowledged instances of people who have been barred from radio and television because of their listings in *Red Channels*. In the fall of 1950, Jean Muir, the former movie star, was dropped from the "Aldrich Family" program under circumstances leaving little doubt that protests from self-appointed guardians of the American way of life, aroused by the fact that she was named in *Red Channels*, were responsible. Miss Muir fought back vigorously, earnestly denied Communist ties or sympathies, and was defended by influential and even conservative friends. Nevertheless, she is still unemployed and apparently unemployable.

Some time later, when the echoes of her case had all but died and it was felt that her fight had at least served the purpose of making another such case impossible, the veteran actor Philip Loeb was dropped from the TV version of the Mollie Goldberg serial—this over the protests of the producer and star, Mrs. Gertrude Berg. Mr. Loeb was listed in *Red Channels* as having belonged to, or sponsored, fourteen allegedly subversive organizations. He has not been employed on radio or television since.

Even more recently James Wechsler, anti-Communist editor of the *New York Post*, was dropped as panelist on the "Starring the Editors" program, following disclosure of what he had never tried to keep secret—his

affiliation many years ago with the Young Communist League. But Mr. Wechsler was not listed in *Red Channels*, and he was reinstated on the program.

The absence of publicized *causes célèbres* is no proof, to be sure, that a blacklist does not operate. The repercussions in the Muir and Loeb cases were loud and the publicity highly disagreeable to the sponsors and networks involved—to say nothing of the fact that it cost his employers \$40,000 to buy up Mr. Loeb's unexpired contract. The man who sells soap or toothpaste or krumbly krispies on the air is not in business to offend potential customers, right, left, or crooked. Television contracts, in particular, are of short duration—how much simpler not to renew; not to hire in the present or immediate future anyone who might be considered "controversial," i.e., listed in *Red Channels*. The sponsor need not be motivated in this by any particular desire to rid the industry of Communist influence. He is not concerned necessarily with the truth or falsity of the charges in *Red Channels*. He is simply playing it safe.

On the other hand, rejection of a performer who has been listed in *Red Channels* is not proof positive of a blacklist either. Even if a statistical study should show—and I think it would—that the 151 listees in *Red Channels* are not getting the work they used to, or getting a good deal less work, blacklisting would still not be established as the primary cause. Other factors would have to be taken into account. Consider the plight of those idols of yesteryear—Kukla, Fran and Ollie, Garry Moore, Faye Emerson, etc., etc. None is listed in *Red Channels* and all are having sponsor trouble. Had these, and other, diminished or vanished figures in TV been politically minded, how easy it would be to blame their fall from grace on a political blacklist—and how misleading!

WHATEVER the true facts, however, most people in the industry seem to believe that a blacklist exists. Their panic is genuine, even if it sometimes seems disproportionate. The threats of the right, the alarmist warn-

ings of the left, have had their fullest effects in radio and TV. The wildest rumor is accepted as gospel truth; the faintest "boo" makes people run for their lives. Unquestionably panic has served to aggravate a condition that was not healthy to begin with.

In this atmosphere of unreasoning terror, it is not easy to ascertain the truth. People in radio and TV flee the simplest questions, or give the wildest and most contradictory answers. Who is using the blacklist—sponsor, network, advertising agency? Everybody or nobody? Who are the victims? Are they Communists, conspirators of the deepest dye, or innocent victims of perhaps misplaced generosity—lovers of peace, justice, and folk music? How great is the damage? Not even the best-informed people in the industry—the heads of the protective trade unions, the responsible representatives of management, the legal minds engaged in untangling the many embarrassments caused by the controversy—give you plain, straight answers. And yet, surely, these are the questions that must be answered if our concern for civil liberties and our sympathy for the victims of injustice are to take any practical form.

Accordingly, a searching examination by sober minds unconnected with the industry, able to give us the benefit of calm appraisal and unswayed judgment, would seem indicated. Certainly nothing could be more welcome or useful. It was admirable of the American Civil Liberties Union to have undertaken such a survey, even on its own initiative. It was a piece of bad luck, in my opinion, that the job was assigned to Merle Miller, novelist and ACLU Board member, unfitted, as it turned out (whatever his other virtues), temperamentally and emotionally for such a task.

MR. MILLER's report to the ACLU has been published in book form under the title *The Judges and the Judged*. It has been enthusiastically received in orthodox liberal circles, and some of our leading liberals have endorsed it. It bears also the unqualified endorsement of the chairman of the ACLU Board of Directors, Mr. Ernest Angell.

Robert E. Sherwood, too, contributes a foreword that embarrasses one for his reputation. "This book tells with accuracy and objectivity a factual story," says Mr. Sherwood. But not a word of this survives a careful examination of the book itself.

The Judges and the Judged can serve only to spread the rumors of a blacklist in radio-TV: it does absolutely nothing to establish the facts. It is sleazy reporting altogether, showing every sign of hasty or careless assemblage; it is a hodge-podge of so-called data consisting of clippings, jottings, quotes from people whose identity is never revealed, and dubious testimony in general, accepted in evidence without any signs of check or balance. More serious than this general sloppiness are the indications that Mr. Miller embarked on his inquiry with his mind made up well in advance. This anxiety to prove a case has led to serious distortions of fact.

A fellow Board member, Mr. Merlyn Pitzele, has taken him seriously and successfully to task for his errors in a review of the book in the *New Leader* (May 12) and in an exchange of letters between himself and Mr. Miller that followed in the same magazine (June 16). Mr. Miller was forced to acknowledge "errors in arithmetic"—curiously, they are all in one direction; it is always the publishers of *Red Channels* and their supporters who are short-changed.

The best one can say for Mr. Miller in this respect is that terror is contagious, and he seems to have succumbed to the panic in the industry. In explanation of the anonymity of his sources he says: "The investigator felt that mentioning any name . . . no matter how favorable the context, might affect a livelihood now or in the future. With a few exceptions (public figures like Philip Murray, Trygve Lie, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, etc.) the names of those condemned in

Counterattack and listed in *Red Channels* are not repeated here." Having said this, however, he repeats no less than twenty of the names mentioned in *Red Channels*—Jean Muir and Philip Loeb, of course, and also Gypsy Rose Lee, Tom Glazer, The Weavers, Fredric March and Florence Eldridge, Hazel Scott, Alfred Drake, Judy Holliday, Meg Mundy, Irene Wicker, Josh White, Selena Royle, Joe Julian, and others (none really a public figure like Mrs. Roosevelt or Trygve Lie)—leaving us to brood over the possible damage his absent-mindedness has done to their careers and livelihoods.

BUT was it absent-mindedness? On close scrutiny these lapses from good intention seem to be part of a pattern. With some exceptions, where there are names, there is no testimony; and where there is testimony there are no names. It is fair to state that his key witnesses are nameless, which means that their crucial testimony cannot be checked.

Thus Mr. Miller offers in evidence the statements of "A once prosperous television writer, a well-known radio and Broadway actress, a man who until recently was one of the most successful radio-television producers, a well-known comedian," etc., etc., and it speaks triumphantly for his formula that they all have the same tale to tell, as if speaking in concert, of desolation and doom. An "influential and vigorously anti-Communist lawyer, a number of whose clients are in the radio and television field," strikes the keynote: "Everyone of them [the 151 listees] has been affected. A few don't even know it, but they've all lost jobs. A majority have lost a great many jobs, and a good-sized minority just aren't working at their professions any more."

This is a strong statement, and even Mr. Miller seems to feel that it could stand toning down. "A few," he admits grudgingly, "most of them among the less prominent listees, continue to work, sometimes anonymously, often with credit, perhaps because their names are not well known to the general public." (Among the people listed in

*Thus, Mr. Miller had written that "one actor's most recent listing was 1938; many had no listing after 1941; a sizeable minority, none after 1945." Mr. Pitzele pointed out that every name had a listing after 1938, only 3 had none after 1941, and 2 more none after 1945. The "sizeable minority" with no listing after 1945 amounts to 5 out of 151.

Red Channels who continue to work, "with credit, perhaps because their names are not well known," are Abe Burrows, Ben Grauer, Henry Morgan.)

More than our curiosity is aroused by the anonymity of the key witnesses. We have questions to ask them, questions raised by their own testimony. What, for example, was the Hooper rating of the "Well-Known Comedian" when he was dropped from the air—a listing no less important than *Red Channels* in determining who is to be retained and who let go in radio and television?

We would particularly like to check upon the amplification that Mr. Miller gratuitously supplies for the statement of the unidentified lawyer: "a former network executive has 'for reasons not unconnected with that publication [*Red Channels*]' resigned and turned to another field for his employment. A long-time producer has become a magazine columnist. A once successful script writer is 'trying my hand' at magazine fiction; he has yet to make a sale. Another listee has gone to the West Coast as a scenario writer and states 'I am doing all right in the movies, now, until, I suppose, the House Committee [on Un-American Activities] subpoenas me.' Several actors and actresses who once depended on their income from radio and television to supplement the always unpredictable amounts earned in the theater have, one reports, 'given up sitting by the phone any more.' One has become a part-time sales clerk in a Manhattan department store; a second actress decided 'I'd better get married, that's one way of being sure to eat.' She did. A third recently opened in a play 'which looks as if it'll run forever, or six months anyway, so right now I don't have to worry. But next year?'"

Surely we have the right to ask for stronger examples than these of people driven out of the profession by the blacklist. Show business is ever precarious, and quite a few people in it, and not in *Red Channels*, have given up sitting by the phone. The listee who has gone to the West Coast is not exactly out of the profession; he has merely transferred to the most remunerative branch of it. The same might be said of the actress who is in a

play that "promises to run forever." How many actresses not in *Red Channels* would hesitate to trade places with her? And what shall we say of the actress who so blandly grabbed a husband for a meal ticket? Is she the first to trade the chancy rouge pots of the theater for the more regular fleshpots of marriage?

Was anything ever stranger than Mr. Miller's crusade—his efforts to remedy injustices perpetrated by unnamed agencies on individuals who are also nameless?

WE MIGHT have to acknowledge the fears of some of the witnesses, even if we cannot share them. Let sleeping dogs lie, would seem to be their motto—why put the baying hounds on the trail again? But this is precisely what Mr. Miller's book is calculated to do—and has done. Besides evoking a heated reiteration of old accusations and counter-accusations, it has stirred the publishers of *Red Channels* to fresh activity; if only to answer Mr. Miller's attack on them, they must try to prove that their charges were justified, that their booklet was not issued without reason, that a danger exists, and that they performed a public service in pointing it out.

Moreover, the ACLU itself did not intend to rest with surveying the situation. On the basis of Mr. Miller's report, says the introduction, the ACLU "is urging the Federal Communications Commission to demand that those licensees (stations and networks) . . . refrain from making use of any blacklist of radio-television performers, and from dealing with anyone who uses such a blacklist." The petition has since been submitted to and twice denied by the FCC. Had it been entertained, however, who would doubt that the FCC would have been more finicky than Mr. Miller in the matter of evidence? It might have even demanded names and cases—particularly names.

I have placed much stress on Mr. Miller's insistence on the anonymity of his witnesses, not only because I think it renders their testimony, and therefore his whole book, invalid, but because I seem to sense in it a clumsy

and somewhat futile extension of the general hush-hush defense set up in liberal circles when the embarrassing question arises of Communist influence on various movements and causes. Inquiry into the backgrounds and associations of those prominent in certain movements—certainly useful and necessary in determining the extent and method of Communist infiltration—is condemned in itself as an act of “witch-hunting,” for to inquire, it is argued, is to embarrass, and to name, in these heated times, is to condemn. By now it is amply clear that this defense, whatever the motives behind it, has protected no one from baseless charges, or damage to his reputation and livelihood. It has served only to sabotage all efforts, governmental or private, to elicit the genuine facts, and has maintained and spread the whole atmosphere of suspicion and conspiracy that has bedeviled this problem from the beginning. It has helped make a national figure of the notorious Senator McCarthy. It has duped many respectable and patriotic citizens. It has been used to shield the guilty rather than to protect the innocent. Nor has it, as I have said, diminished by one little whit the voice of wholesale slander.

THAT innocent people were involved—and sometimes even at the very top—in the organizations and movements used as fronts by the Communists cannot be doubted. The Communist game is one of the oldest flim-flams, and has served as the basis for some of the corniest of “B” movie plots. A group of con men come to a small town; they have a high-sounding promotion scheme that they claim will benefit the whole community. Naturally, they first approach the respected citizens of the community, and seek to involve them as much as possible in their project, in order through them to be able to fleece the farmers, the workingmen, and the widow ladies. Moved by vanity a little—for their names are to head the project—as well as civic interest, and with amazing gullibility, these respected citizens lend their names and more. All goes swimmingly and the value of the phony stock soars in the community, until

certain suspicions are aroused. Low fellows brand the whole project for the swindle it is, and accuse the respected citizens of complicity in it. Feeling runs high. Factions form. Some defend, some attack the leading citizens—all without the best knowledge of the facts. The leading citizens are in a pickle. They, themselves, have begun to suspect the truth. Some were taken in by others, but cannot expose these now without exposing themselves. They stall, they delay, they deny, they fumble, they mumble. Meanwhile, like as not, in the confusion the professional con men make their getaway, and the respected citizens are left holding the bag.

Into all this it is not difficult to fit Mr. Miller. He’s the trusting soul, say the editor of the local newspaper, who writes indignant editorials calling for restraint, for trust, for patience, who denounces the mob and defends the leading citizens. Blinded by his political antipathy to the attackers, angry over the excesses of these hotheaded elements, the editor distorts the evidence, minimizes the swindle, and tries to divert the wrath of the community from the original swindlers to those who protest the swindle.

A man so hell-bent on protecting his own side is not the man to bring in an unbiased report. He will inquire only into the irresponsibility of the hotheads, he will close his eyes to the derelictions of the influential citizens, permitting none of them to be considered anything but innocent. It might be too much to ask him to separate the sheep from the goats, but need he pretend that all are sheep, even when the horns show?

If in some circles the mere mention of a name in *Red Channels* is enough to damn a person for all eternity, it is hardly less true that for Mr. Miller, and for people like him, it is almost an accolade, proof positive of non-Communism, of virtue and of superlative talent besides. The listees are mentioned only in praise, either by themselves or by others. None will admit Communist sympathies—not even in the security of his anonymity.

Mr. Miller will not even admit the possibility of the culpability of any listee; blanket accusation is opposed by blanket whitewash-

ing. Prove it, he says, and in the same breath: Don't you dare try. Or, as he puts it: "Do 41 affiliations suffice? Will a dozen do? Who is to say? Who is to judge?"

Well, for many of us 41 affiliations would suffice, in the absence of disproof—or two affiliations, for that matter, of a certain kind. But Mr. Miller's question is rhetorical. He casts his doubts and runs.

But this will not do. The question raised in *Red Channels* is not of membership in the Communist party, which, Mr. Miller observes unnecessarily, none can prove except maybe the FBI. The question is one of *collaboration* with the Communists, which *can* be established by the *public activities* of the suspected persons. There is no exact dividing line between the foolish innocents and the guilty, but neither is there one between sanity and insanity. Nevertheless, society may sometimes find it necessary to draw the line. Who is to judge, and how the judgment is to be arrived at, are real questions at the present time, and are not to be asked rhetorically. They will continue to be asked by our society, you can depend on it, until some straight answer is given.

MR. MILLER's bias is nowhere more clearly displayed than in the chapter entitled "The Other Side of the Coin." There have also been rumors, in the entertainment world, of a second blacklist on radio and television, operated by Communist sympathizers in the industry and directed against anti-Communists. Mr. Miller and the ACLU come out strongly in principle against both types of blacklist, and Mr. Miller was under instructions from the ACLU to investigate both, which he did.

But with how much zeal in the case of the one, and how indifferently in that of the other!*

The general conclusion that he reports to the ACLU is that "in the several weeks of the investigation that was concerned with

*The reader is referred again to Mr. Pitzele's exchange of letters with Mr. Miller in the *New Leader* of June 16 for some interesting documentation of this point.

this [the blacklisting of anti-Communists] aspect of the whole problem, not a single instance of proof was uncovered. . . . Of course, if there is a Communist blacklist, it, like the party itself, operates in secret." One cannot refrain from observing that Mr. Miller is probably the last man in the world to try to penetrate *this* secrecy. But it is more relevant to point out that there is not a particle of difference in the kind of testimony Mr. Miller accepts as proof of an anti-Communist blacklist and that which he rejects as proof of a Communist blacklist. (After all, the networks keep their blacklist secret, too, if there is one.) He quotes, for example, the statement of an anti-Communist "soap opera" actor: "I've a strong feeling that I've lost out all along the line in radio and television because I'm a strong anti-Communist, but certainly I couldn't prove it in a court of law"—and he finds this unconvincing. And so it is, certainly. But is it any weaker than the statement of "The poet, playwright and television writer whose name was listed in *Red Channels* and sometime earlier was denounced in *Counterattack* as a 'party-liner'": "I'll admit the whole thing could be coincidence, but it's awful strange"? Aside from the higher billing Mr. Miller gives his poet, why should one testimony carry more weight than the other?

To summarize, Mr. Miller's report would seem to be a sort of *Red Channels* in reverse. It opposes guilt by association with innocence by association, refusing to admit evidence pointing to guilt as *Red Channels* refuses to admit evidence pointing to innocence. Neither tells the whole story; Mr. Miller's book is no more a fair report on the blacklist in radio and TV than *Red Channels* is a proper report on Communist influence in the industry.

TO SAY all these things about Mr. Miller's book is not to deny, however, that a situation exists in radio and television that distresses decent people. Miss Muir remains unemployed and apparently unemployable, as do some other innocent or innocuous people. This is a shameful fact.

It is our conviction that panic—in some instances deliberately fostered by the “left”—is to blame rather than deliberate policy; we still have no proof that there is a deliberate and concerted effort on the part of sponsors and networks to blacklist the people named in *Red Channels*. Much of the fault seems to lie on a lower level; indeed, largely responsible may be people who are loudest in bemoaning the blacklist, and who testify most eagerly to its existence.

“You see this list? . . . I don’t bother suggesting them any more,” says a “leading actor and writer’s agent,” one of Mr. Miller’s chosen witnesses.

“Nobody has to tell me not to use anybody listed in *Red Channels* if I can help it; I just know not to,” says “an account executive in one of the half-dozen largest advertising agencies.”

“Look at the spot I’m in,” says a “television producer.” “All these actors, the old stand-bys. You want to use them; they are the best you can get; the parts are practically written for them, but you can’t. . . . Just look at that list. And there’s nothing you can do about it.”

Well, the retort springs naturally to the lips: you could protest! You could even resign. People have been known to give up jobs, both for reasons of principle or because of intolerable professional conditions. It is not to Mr. Miller’s credit that he directs none of his anger at these craven underlings for their self-implicating testimony, but rather seems to lend a sympathetic ear to their alleged plight.

How misplaced this sympathy may be is underlined by the fact, as we learn, that the strongest resistance to blacklisting has come from conservative sponsors—U.S. Steel, for example—who cannot be accused of liberal or leftist sympathies, but who prefer to make their own judgments and refuse to be dictated to by irresponsible outsiders. The Celanese Corporation, accused in Mr. Sherwood’s impassioned foreword to *The Judges and the Judged* of furnishing “an ugly demonstration of the conditions . . . described and documented,” settled the dispute in question—

with playwright Elmer Rice—amicably, so that the publishers were forced embarrassingly to append a footnote to his foreword praising the company “for creating a precedent by repudiating blacklisting.” Procter and Gamble, a huge sponsor of radio and TV shows, plans similarly to pursue, we are informed, a fair-minded and independent course.

FOR some months now representatives of management have been meeting with the heads of the entertainment trade unions in an effort to end the present confused situation—intolerable to the so-called “judges” as well as to the “judged.” That nothing has so far come of these meetings is chiefly due to disagreement among leaders of the entertainment unions themselves rather than to management. All the plans proposed envision an impartial board of inquiry, headed by people of acknowledged integrity and liberal views. The minimal objective sought is to give people who may be unjustly accused an opportunity to be heard, to be cleared, to be returned to a “non-controversial” status, with immediate benefit to some if not to all. Management has agreed to stand by the findings of such a board against irresponsible pressures from the outside. And with powerful trade unions like the American Federation of Radio Artists and Actors’ Equity supporting such a proposal, who can doubt its effectiveness?

But the unions have not been able to get accord on the plan; the profession remains split, with both the “right” and the “left” against it, and only a small group of middle-of-the-road moderates actively pushing its adoption. The “right” apparently thinks the suggested medicine not strong enough; the “liberals” argue, in their panic, that to free some of the listees of the charges against them would be to impute guilt to others who might be equally innocent but less successful in demonstrating their innocence.

Mr. Miller, too, objects to the industry proposals, and on even purer grounds. Indeed, his position in *The Judges and the Judged*, when finally—on page 215—he gets

around to presenting it, is so extreme as to make his report seem an act of supererogation. For the accuracy of the *Red Channels* listings, and the question of whether or not a blacklist is used in radio and television, is now seen to be irrelevant and immaterial.

"The basic question," he says, "is whether in a free society employers in radio or television or any other industry not declared 'sensitive' do in fact have 'the right and duty to consider the political ideologies'—past or present—of those they hire. It is whether a network or an independent station, or, for that matter, a factory manufacturing M-1 rifles, is upholding or traducing the democratic tradition by requiring its employees to sign a 'loyalty' statement or 'oath.' It is whether any non-governmental employer has the right to decide who among his employees is a good American and who is not. It is whether a man's political beliefs are now to determine if he can continue to work at his chosen profession. It is whether a man's political beliefs are no longer to be considered a private matter." (*Italics mine.*)

This, if it means anything at all, would make the Rockefellers out to be enemies of freedom if they refused to hire Earl Browder, a qualified bookkeeper, as their accountant because of their fear that his political views might affect his double-entries. It is a far-reaching argument, indeed, and it raises some hard questions which need to be answered. How does Mr. Miller stand on the house-cleaning operations of the CIO, which, though not a government agency, rid itself of Communists (and their close collaborators) who were in positions of influence and power? And what did Mr. Miller himself think he was doing, a few years ago, when he helped throw the Communists out of their posts in the American Veterans Committee? And one is also provoked to ask why the ACLU itself bars Communists from its various boards—after all, who declared it to be a "sensitive" industry? And how could all this house-cleaning have been accomplished without inquiry and exposure, to the detriment of the people exposed?

Mr. Miller is apparently opposed to all

inquiry into a man's political beliefs—no matter how dangerous these beliefs may be. If we follow him, he is opposed even to investigations conducted by organizations like the Anti-Defamation League or the American Jewish Committee into the secret membership of an organization like the Ku Klux Klan, on the grounds that the disclosures would be calculated to prejudice Jewish and Catholic employers.

THE implications of such a position carry far. Into Germany for example, where the liberal German youth (see "German Students Seek 'Peace with the Jews'" in COMMENTARY, August 1952) is protesting the exhibition of movies—even though they are "shmaltzy" love stories free of political content—directed by Veit Harlan, who made pictures for Goebbels. And if Mr. Miller's position is to be maintained, indeed why may not Nazi professors teach again in German universities? And in American ones, too, for that matter?

We reject this as utter nonsense, to be sure. It is intolerable that the rascals who shared the guilt of Buchenwald should be permitted to make too handsome a living in the public eye. A free society may have to tolerate its enemies, but it is not called upon to reward them. And is the present less vivid to the mind's eye than the past, and have we not the slave camps of Russia and the war in Korea to jog our sensibilities?

More is involved here than the simple right of a man to hold a job and "an unpopular opinion" at the same time. A church board may be permitted to reject a Communist as a minister of the Gospel, whatever his training in theological seminaries. Nor must a Communist, in all reason, be received on the staff of a university dedicated to the principle of academic freedom; we do not hire a bank robber to guard the money in the bank, the wolf to watch over the sheepfold. We have the example of Dr. Gene Weltfish, a Columbia instructor in anthropology, who in a public statement parroted the Communist charges of germ warfare in Korea. She and a Dr. James Endicott, for-

merly a missionary of the United Church of Canada in China, acted in concert, if the press reported correctly, to give a semblance of school and church support to this organized slander. And who would have listened to them if not for the jobs they held? We are not greatly disturbed for civil liberties to learn that Dr. Endicott was removed from his missionary post because of his association with the Chinese Reds, nor would we think it a violation of academic freedom if Dr. Weltfish lost her job at Columbia. They abused their respected positions and functions, not to speak of exposing their lack of intellectual competence for the high educative positions they hold. These were no simple preacher and teacher, but true partisan fighters hiding ideological weapons under their clerical and academic robes.

How does this apply to the situation in radio and television? To be sure, some of the jobs held by the listees seem harmless enough, even in so vital a medium of communication and culture. Many of the jobs, however, do not fall into the harmless category, by any standards. "The famous radio and television producer now not working" was no simple job-holder. At the very least, he held the right to hire and fire. And if it could be established that he was under Communist domination, who would argue that he had used his discretion solely in the interests of his programs and his employers?

It is true that an actor in television can do less harm than a spy in an atom plant, that a script writer cannot convey direct Communist propaganda to the screen, that a Communist director may not take too many liberties with the script assigned to him. Yet it was with very good reason that the Communist party concentrated such fierce attention in the past decade on the entertainment industries; and so energetically colonized them. What other field—short of government—confers on the job-holder such glamor and prestige, with the privilege of mingling with the high and mighty?

The situation in radio and television cannot be viewed narrowly or merely professionally; it must be viewed against the larger background of the national and international situation. In the cold war, the question of who commands a public forum looms no less large than the possession of air bases and planes in Korea. Many citizens have been troubled, angered, alarmed, by the Communist occupation in this country, until recently, of vantage points in schools and universities, in newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, in trade unions and voluntary organizations for the good and welfare, to say nothing of government itself. The powerful influence wielded on key opinion-molders by the Institute of Pacific Relations serves to remind us that these fears were not entirely groundless.

If the danger in these fields seems to have diminished, if Communist influence has been rooted out of trade unions, out of schools and churches, out of publishing houses and magazines—out of government itself, for that matter—we can hardly thank the so-called civil libertarians, whose record is one of hampering inquiry and blocking protest except that aimed at protecting Communist-fronters from investigation and counteraction. Nor, to return to radio and television, can we forget the "liberal" protest over the firing of Johannes Steel, William Gailmor, and other news commentators, whose jobs were surely anything but harmless.

Small wonder, then, that the effective fight against Communist influence has been conducted by people too far to the right, by unscrupulous demagogues whose methods we rightly deplore and whose weapons may prove to be double-edged. We of the liberal faith have largely surrendered to them the fight against Communists in this country, which should have been the concern and the duty of every person interested in civil liberties. After all, has history known any such suppression of human freedom as the Communists have been able to accomplish, with their pattern of deceitful championship of civil rights and mendacious provocation on their way to power, and total suppression

after? Need we detail the record from Russia through Czechoslovakia and the satellite states, down to the recent elimination of all liberties in China? Their strategy in this country is no different.

MR. MILLER and his supporters may peddle their doctrine of absolute civil libertarianism to their heart's content—this being a free country—but how many people at large will accept the thesis that Communists—unchallenged and unknown—should be permitted to infiltrate key positions in education, publishing, the communications industries, government itself?

It may well be that the basic problem is not what to do with the Communists. It is almost sufficient to expose these, for they fear exposure more than the direct punishments. They have amply demonstrated their willingness to go to jail rather than tell the truth. Our problem may be with the persistent fellow-travelers who can deny in good conscience that they are Communists, yet who stubbornly follow the party line. And what shall we do about people like Merle Miller, who are anti-Communist, but who help afford the Communists not only sanctuary but concealment?

What can we do save to plead with liberals to ignore the counsels of such misty-eyed people—lest the fight for freedom be lost indeed. It would be the greatest mistake to accept Mr. Miller and his like as true champions of civil liberties. They are no Amadis de Gaul certainly, but rather Don Quixotes. They display the same tendency to mistake windmills for giants—as witness Mr. Miller's 100-page tilting against *Red Channels*. It is well to keep in mind the episode in which the Knight of the Mournful Countenance sought to free certain unsavory characters from the toils of the law, under the mistaken impression and on their own testimony that they were only pranksters.

It should also be remembered that Don Quixote not only became quite dishonest in his efforts to maintain his dangerous delusions against the most overwhelming evidence to the contrary, but that he also tried

to drown out with shouted arguments the voice of common sense.*

IN THE matter of radio and television, the voice of common sense would seem to be clear enough.

We must, first of all, acknowledge the facts. In the past decade, the temper, the atmosphere, the prevailing mode in entertainment circles was to an alarming extent pro-Communist. The policy of the United Front, the soft speeches of Earl Browder, the fact that we were Russia's ally in the war against Hitler, served to obscure for many people the true nature and the true purpose of the Communist party. So well entrenched did Communists and Communist collaborators become in the entertainment industry that for a while the quickest path to advancement in the theater, in Hollywood, in radio and television was that which ran unquestionably close to the Communist line.

Some who followed the line were simply following fashion, others pursued self-interest, a large number—I would like to believe—were betrayed by misty-eyed idealism, by a vague sense of guilt, by a quixotic sense of justice. We must forgive these fond, fool-

* At Mr. Pitzele's insistence, the Board of the ACLU appointed a special committee headed by chairman Ernest Angell to consider his charges against Mr. Miller's book. In a 3300-word report the committee found valid each of Mr. Pitzele's major specific charges (involving omission, serious and misleading inaccuracy, and distortion) and recommended their correction in future editions of the book. The report was approved by the Board, which also voted to leave the manner of its public release "to the discretion of the office." To this date, the report has not been released. Nor has it been made available to the reviewers of the book, most of whom were highly laudatory, or to the twenty-four liberals who at the solicitation of the ACLU lent their names to an endorsement of the book's accuracy and objectivity in a full-page ad in the *New York Times* book section. Nor has the ACLU's official endorsement been withdrawn; indeed the Board voted formally not to do so. Individuals inquiring about the report have been refused a copy, and given instead a prepared 100-word statement. One such inquirer characterized this statement to this writer as "vague, unspecific, and giving a distorted and therefore misleading account of the findings of the report."

ish people, but we can hardly respect their opinions, or their knowledge of politics and world affairs even today. We are entitled to view them with some misgivings—"the fool returneth to his folly as a dog to his vomit," says the Bible.

However, to punish them is like whipping a dreamy child, and this writer has fought and will continue to fight punitive measures against them. It is an indispensable part of any decent or practical program that we declare an amnesty for such as these, at least as far as *past* sins are concerned. Let them be judged only by their *present* or *future* conduct. Also we should perhaps exempt from too close scrutiny people whose jobs are minor and whose influence is small—on the job or in the union.

The story must be different, however, with the party-liners and the hatchet men in the industry, whose viciousness and treachery went beyond the imagination, and some of whom still pursue party policy and the party line. The entertainment trade unions know them well, for the industry has had its share of trouble from them, and can testify that their strength is far from eliminated even today.

A fair-minded board of inquiry, such as has been proposed by management and trade union official alike, would first of all serve the function of getting the truly innocent and innocuous off the hook. It would have to weigh, by their *present* speeches and actions, the sincerity of those who were more deeply implicated in collaboration with the Communists but who have since avowed the error of their ways.

A core would remain of people within the industry suspected with some reason of still being Communists or Communist collaborators. Since the board of inquiry's function would be to absolve rather than to punish, it would have to ignore these people, leaving them to be defended by people like Merle Miller who believe in the fullest rights for the Communists, including apparently their right to keep their views concealed and to engage in secret con-

spiracy, and at the same time to remain unnoticed.

How effective such a plan could be, the example of Hollywood may illustrate, where of two hundred persons hit by shotgun charges of the American Legion and other bodies, all but twenty have been freed from suspicion or blame: this through the old-fashioned American prescription compounded of knowledge of the facts, free discussion, and open covenants openly arrived at. Such matters are best settled, our experience has taught us, not by reference to or through law, but by codes of practice arrived at through negotiation, compromise, and fair play, voluntarily adopted and voluntarily enforced.

Such a solution will not, nor need it, satisfy the civil libertarians, who are free to continue their campaign for absolute rights for all absolutely. Our concern must for the present be more narrow. We wish to get good people out of trouble first. And then we are willing to take up the question of what to do with the bad.

Granted the solution proposed by the more sober heads in the industry is not perfect. It will not guarantee to everyone in the industry today—including the most egregious Communist supporter—his right to the high-level job he may now hold. But it leaves Mr. Miller free to continue his crusade on that score. And it has the merit of dealing with the problem in terms of the truth. We will at least know whom we are defending and why. We will know who is being punished and why. And we can make our own decisions based on a knowledge of the facts, and decide for ourselves whom we wish to fight for and whose troubles are no concern of ours, or of any lover of justice.

Let us, whatever our disagreements on civil liberties, at least put a halt to the shameful procedure that meets the demagogic half-truth with the liberal half-lie.

What ever happened to the old liberal conviction that, in the fight for justice, the best weapon is the truth?